Reach Through the Darkness

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/8799883.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Gravity Falls
Relationship:	Stanford Pines/Stanley Pines
Characters:	Grunkle Stan | Stanley "Stanford" Pines, The Author | Original Stanford Pines
Additional Tags:	Dream Sex, Dreams, Vomiting, Alcohol Abuse/Alcoholism, Violence, Dream cannibalism, Dubious Consent
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2016-12-09 Words: 4,207 Chapters: 1/2

Reach Through the Darkness

by orphan_account

Summary

Stan had more important things to worry about than some strange dreams – until, that is, his dreams started talking back.

Stan woke shaking, though the air felt compressed, too hot. He didn't sit up, waiting for the images to dissolve the way his dreams always did.

Ford on his knees, his elbow caught back, a fist in his hair – laughter growing behind Stan, until it was rumbling through him. It was *him.*

He scrubbed his eyes. Any minute now.

"Help me! Stanley, help! Do something – anything!"

It was just an unsettling dream merging with memories. Stan had bigger issues to worry about today – his mortgage was due in half a week and it had been raining nonstop for the last two, enough of a torrent to keep even seasoned Oregonian tourists at bay. He sat up. There was pain in his back, a crick that never quite went away after Cambodia, and he was itchy, always *so damn itchy* this time of year. Stan yawned and scratched under his stomach, forcing himself into the nonchalance of the morning.

By the time his coffee was brewed, he hadn't forgotten the dream, but he had shaken it off. Stan was a master of that, by now.

*

Stan dropped his magnifying glass and scratched his hands over his face, then buried them in his hair. It was impossible, he thought for the thousandth time, knowing even as he thought it that the flipside of that would come sooner or later: That it didn't matter if it was impossible. Staring at Ford's slow descent into madness, however, kept him firmly in Camp Impossible. There were other journals to find; half the materials he needed for the portal didn't even make *sense*; the encoded messages sprawled throughout the journal could inspire migraines just from looking at them.

Stan tugged his hair. His old standby fantasy crept up on him without his permission, such a familiar tread in his mind that he could find himself walking it at any hour of the day. Sometimes, that pissed him off. Now, he welcomed it in a resigned way, letting the sea-salt smell fill his nostrils. He could almost feel the overwhelming blanket of heat from the sun and the paper-thin crackling along his shoulders from a peeling sunburn.

Their ship wasn't made of gold – that couldn't float, after all – but there was gold lined everywhere, on doorknobs, as decorative touches on their lawn chairs, embossing the circular windows. There were two – no, three – women, young and slender and effervescent, circling Stan's chair with neon-colored drinks and laughing on cue. They'd all known his name before he introduced himself: *Oh my god, you're Stanley Pines! And that means you're Stanford, right?*

Stanford sat on a crate near the bow, wearing some ridiculous hat to keep the sun off his shoulders and book. His skin was as brown as a nut, his hair longer than Stan had ever seen it, and tousled, probably not brushed since last night.

“Hey!” Stan called out. “Ford! C’mon, get in on some of this action!” The girls tittered; the waves slapped good-naturedly at the boat. Overhead, a few circling seagulls cried at them. The whole world was encouraging Ford to look up and give Stan the crooked, bright smile he could still remember, and join Stan.

Normally, that’s exactly what his brother did.

This time, he tensed and looked back. Like he didn’t understand – or maybe this was the same tension he used to have after a fight, hesitant. Stan couldn’t tell. They stared at each other across the boat. Cold washed over Stan, as sudden as a wave usurping the deck. Something was wrong. His brother’s face seemed to jolt, the color warping, like it did on the TV late on rainy days. When it cleared, he looked different, older and tired and stunned. Stan wasn’t sure he’d ever seen his brother look stunned like that. Stunned was what stupid people were.

“Stanley? What are you – “ He caught the rest of it, then: The boat, the swelling ocean that was taking on a sinister hue, the perfect white beach just a line of hope a few miles out. “Where are we?”

“Cuba,” Stan answered. It was the only answer he had.

One of the girls whimpered with fear. Then the noise was gone, and the girls, and the sun, leaving only the golden-trimmed ship and a dark green sea. He must be dreaming. *Actually* dreaming.

Ford stood. “Cuba? But how is that possible?”

This was Stan’s dream, damn it. That’s how it was possible. He stood, too, and thought fiercely of the sun-swept waves, the tinkling sound of ice, yellow bikinis. The sun came out again, in starts and stops, more reminiscent of the strobe of police lights than sunlight. “Well, first you gotta sail around Florida, take a quick hook up toward the bayou for the jazz, and then head south to warmer waters.”

“No,” Ford said. He stared past Stan, at something on the horizon. This was Stan’s dream, though, and he wasn’t going to let Ford ruin it. “No, this isn’t happening. What are you doing here? Why are – “

The image changed, fluid and abrupt: Ford stood chest-to-chest with Stanley in the tiny bedroom of the original Stan O’ War. He was close enough that Stan could feel his tight breathing.

“Stanley, you have to listen to me. This shouldn’t be happening. *What are you doing?*”

They had built a desk for the room at Ford’s insistence, a rickety, splinter-riddled thing that took up half the room. It was easy for Stan to step Ford into it until his knees buckled against the wood. He sat down hard, his head banging against the wall. A thought came to Stan’s mind – that he was going to strangle Ford. He didn’t want to, but some *other* part of him did, an – attached part of him.

It was quiet, though, in the torrent of other things he wanted – had wanted, had always craved in the sweating dark of bottom bunk, or on the hot, hard mat of the boxing ring, things he could only have in dreams.

Ford gripped his shoulders. “Look at me, Stanley. Look into my eyes – “

Stan opened his mouth against Ford’s jaw. His teeth felt sharp, carnivorous. He dragged them down his brother’s throat. He palmed Ford’s cock through his pants, which made him jump. The thrill of having any sort of power over Ford was irresistible, made Stan tipsy.

“Not him,” Ford said. “Not him, not him, not him.”

Stan felt Ford’s arm move. He was aware that Ford was reaching for something, but wasn’t thinking past anything but the humid heat of the half-broken room and the desperate hunger that had plagued him for decades.

He really should’ve expected the knife.

He woke up with a gasp, clutching his ribs. He could still feel the punch of the knife, would swear he could feel the blood draining out of him and into the palm of his hand. When he took the hand away and looked, his shirt was sweaty but whole. He’d drooled on the table. He was half-hard, his cock pressing against his boxers.

Stan shut the journal with a disgusted snap. “You know what?” he announced, loud enough that dust filtered down from the ceiling. “I need a break. A break! And a drink,” he added in a mumble. “A tall one.”

Ford had already waited two years. Another day wouldn’t hurt.

*

Ford checked his knife for the third time, sighed, and set it on his makeshift table, where he could glance at it without having to unsheathe it. He had been plagued by unsettling dreams, not-dreams, possessions, and what-have-you ever since he arrived at Gravity Falls, and this dimension only seemed to amplify all of that. Well, all of that save for the possessions. He touched a finger to the short hair at his ear line. He had made sure of that.

His home for the time being didn’t afford any natural light, if one could call the light from this dimension *natural.* Normally, this wasn’t a problem, but Ford, still shaken from the dream, didn’t like the way his lantern’s orange light lengthened the shadows. He snuffed the lantern and took out a flashlight, resting it on a pot that ostensibly had a plant, if withered leaves and bent stems counted for a plant. The blue light was enough to work from, at any rate.

He slid his notebook closer to him and touched the tip of his pen to its page. There were no problems that couldn’t be settled with enough paper, ink, and time. Bill had – had *seen* things in Ford’s mind, but Ford hadn’t thought he’d seen everything. The Stan O’ War. The stained mattress, the gray hammock swinging over it. Stan rubbing aloe vera into Ford’s shoulders.

Ford shivered. Bill had suspected. But this didn't feel like something Bill had done, despite all the evidence to the contrary. The Stanley in his dream had been – morbid, and intense, and not quite himself, but not so far from it that he couldn't move like a normal human. Stan had been very comfortable in his body.

If only Ford had seen his eyes.

He didn't know what this meant. Probably nothing. One data point was hardly worth consideration. Ford chewed on the tip of his pen, then settled for writing, in hasty cursive: *Dreamscape's connections to memory? If I've made him an enemy, he becomes an enemy in my dreams.*

*

"Trust me, you'll never find anything like this anywhere else on Earth!" Though, Stan had to admit, the idea that there was another taxidermy pinecone monster somewhere was very amusing. He swept aside the two-dollar curtain to unveil his grand creation, to gasps that were always more earnest than he'd expect.

The family, all the way from Texas, apparently, were noisy – three boys and two girls, all between four and twelve, and while the parents were shmucks, they were nice enough. Stan was glad for the noise, glad even for the sound of a breaking mug followed by panicked shrieking. Though he did, of course, charge the parents the price of the cup – plus what Stan liked to call 'emotional tax.'

The more he had to focus on at hand, the less he had to think about last night's dream. Nightmare? The fact was, however, that the less he had tried to think about it, the more he had, and the more it had baffled and disturbed him. He'd skinned a cat once or twice in his lifetime; beating the hell out of things had been his main state of being since he could remember. But not Ford. Or – not Ford like *that*. Stan's subconscious had delivered some fucked-up dreams his way, but it was always trickling down to Stan, not back out to the rest of the dream. He didn't know what bothered him more: Ford stabbing someone, or being the one stabbed by him.

By the time the Texans had left, it was almost seven, and the rain had started to pick up again. Nothing for it but to close down the Mystery Shack and – and, what, go back into that fucking basement and stare down ghosts? No. Stan changed out of his suit, popped on a fedora, rethought that touch, then headed out into the rain. The one bar in Gravity Falls that hadn't banned him was pathetic, but it was better than the alternative of drinking his leftover peppermint schnapps on Ford's ratty couch until he couldn't move.

The red light from the bar illuminated the dingy parking lot and the grass around it. Stan idled in the parking lot a minute, bracing himself. He was going to drink, smoke, and gamble until Stella kicked him out.

The bar itself was underwhelming when Stan kicked open the door – the same country songs that have probably been playing there for decades, the same ten patrons gathered in the same old chairs, plus a smattering of younger kids looking to play pool and get smashed and flirt.

Stan didn't fit either group, which was fine for his purposes – just meant he could slide between the groups, making money and losing money all over again.

"Alright," Stan announced to the bar at large, once he had his first beer chilling in his grip. "I've got the deck of cards if someone else has got the chips!"

*

Two hours later, Stan was pushed out the door – mostly by a wave of voices, but Barney couldn't resist actually chasing Stan out. It was half a joke, only half because he had lost the most money to Stan. Laughing and shaking it off, Stan swayed in the cold night air for a moment. He patted his wallet, which was heavier than it had been two hours ago, then flipped his lucky ace out of his sleeve and kissed it.

He was just sober enough to drive, and no way in hell was he going to hike up the hilly, curved road back to the Shack. He fumbled with the keys and drove slowly, the thin yellow beams of his headlight illuminating the road and distorting the trees, shadows passing and passing in a pattern too fast for Stan to keep up. He focused on the road. So long as he stayed between the lines, he was fine. And so long as there weren't any deer.

Music. He needed music. Stan fiddled with the radio, skimming through the static and talkshow bullshit and commercials – one eye on the road, one eye on the dial. It wasn't thirty seconds before he found something, but then he looked up, and there *it* was, lithe and huge, bounding from the trees into the hot glare of his headlights.

Stan screamed and slammed on the brakes, bracing for impact.

It never came.

He blinked, groggy and nauseous with adrenaline. His heart pounded hard in his chest. Stan opened his door, leaned out, and vomited, then coughed and stepped out.

Nothing on the side of the road, nothing under his tires, nothing down the ditch. Guess he was more drunk than he thought. But he was halfway home already. Stan stood at the edge of the ditch, swaying slightly, listening to the wind whistle through the trees.

He grunted, and shrugged, and ducked back into his car. If you weren't seeing things in Gravity Falls, you were living wrong. He eased the car back into gear and kept moving forward – his oldest trick in the book, by now.

*

Stan planned to make it to his bed, but there were stairs between him and it, and his chair was comfortable besides, and right *there,* and didn't seem to be spinning. He did the only logical thing and collapsed on it. His bottle of schnapps was on the floor by the chair; he swiped it up as he sat and took a swig, to get the taste of puke out of his mouth – that was all. Then another to enjoy the actual flavor. He would just watch some TV and then go upstairs and sleep it off.

Ah, right. No TV this late. He took another drink. He would just watch the rainbow-colored bars, then, until his body steadied enough for him to brave the stairs. Nice, static rainbow bars. He'd been to more than one actual bar that boasted a similar color scheme – hadn't been to one like it he'd hated. Maybe he'd never been to a bar he hated. Wait – no, there was one in Mexico, a real shit-hole –

–with only one table with gamblers, and half of them with knives on their persons. Stan lingered at the bar, woozy, watching what appeared to be a string of Christmas lights change their color lazily. The bar, which had gouges and stains of dubious origin, started to berate him for leaving his drink on it for as long as he had. "Don't be a pussy," it added. "Go join the game! You definitely won't be shanked!"

Stan turned to look at the gamblers again – looked like a game of Blackjack, which was one of Stan's favorites, easy to rig and easy to win with bluffs. "Whaddya think, Ford?"

Because of course Ford was with him, young and scrappy and looking nerdy as ever, even here, with his coat faded and torn in places and, shock of shocks, scruff on his face. Ford shrugged and took a drink of his beer. "Are you a coward?" he asked. His voice was – wrong, too high-pitched, like it was scratching its way out of his throat. Stan turned to look at him –

–and they weren't in the bar, anymore, but in their old room. Ford was sick, bent over a bucket and vomiting. Stan kept whispering, "Keep it down," because if their mother heard him, she'd want to investigate, and if she found them drunk, she would *lose her mind.* Stan climbed into Ford's bed and held his shoulders. The sight of Ford being sick made his own stomach turn, but no way was Stan going to make this shit worse. Ford could afford to be a lightweight – he was a nerd.

His body was hot to the touch, and they had to hunch over to avoid hitting their heads on the ceiling. The bed was so small that they barely fit, Stan half-wrapped around Ford. He shuddered against Stan, gasping for breath. When he collected himself and raised his head, his face was pale, practically glowing. "We may have miscalculated," Ford said.

"No shit?"

"Stanley?" Ford said, but – *not* Ford; his face had frozen, a perfect snapshot. Stan turned. Another Ford was standing in the middle of the room. "It is you," he said.

Before Stan could say anything, however, he was gone with a sound like a zipper. Ford – his, not the stranger – was leaning into him. Somehow their bodies had shifted, Ford's calf between Stan's thighs, his ankle pressed against Stan's balls. The bucket was gone, though Stan still felt drunk and Ford was still pale and sweaty, out of breath. Ford shifted his leg, pressure on Stan's soft cock, and the reality of the situation struck Stan – the dream-logic, the unbearable heat, and the cramped space that was closing in on them more with each passing second.

Stan did the only obvious thing: He turned his face toward Ford's and kissed him. Ford shivered and kissed back, pivoting and pulling Stan with him until Stan was on top of him, straddling him, his shoulder blades bumping the ceiling.

Ford's voice, distant and patched, came to Stan like it was coming over a walkie-talkie: "—why aren't y—"

Ford's throat begged for Stan's mouth, long and white and untouched; it went pink under Stan's teeth. The noises he made were bright and surprised, little puffs of moans that made Stan want to devour him.

"–this won't cha—"

Ford wrapped his legs around Stan; they were naked, Ford's cock hard as hell and grinding against Stan's stomach. His fingers slid through Stan's hair, tugging with every kiss, every thrust. Stan licked the hard button of Ford's nipple, then sucked it into his mouth, relishing in the low-pitched growl that came out of Ford's throat.

"Listen to me, Stanley – "

Stan paused and lifted his face. He wanted to watch Ford come. What he did, however, was lean back down, kiss Ford, deep and slow, and then bite down. Ford's tongue came out of his mouth neatly, without blood. Stan swallowed. It was like sucking a cock down his throat, fat and full and hot. He bent down and took another bite, out of the side of Ford's neck.

It felt natural. This was what happened to most twins, anyway: One body consumed by the other, piece by piece, until only the survivor needed nutrients and love. Stan took a bite out of Ford's chest, taking a mouthful of his heart. That was the only part of him that bled, leaving messy trails down his stomach, a path for Stanley's mouth to take.

A fist took Stan by the hair and yanked him up – a body pressed against his back, clothes scratching Stan's bare skin. Stan shivered and bucked against the sensation. A six-fingered hand wrapped around his throat, and Stanford's voice boomed throughout the room:

"Listen to me, you idiot!"

Stan jolted. The room was gone, and the Ford under him was gone. He was on a beach, disoriented and naked. Ford's hand was still clamped around his throat.

"Are you listening?" Ford asked.

"…yeah."

Ford squatted in front of him. When Stan tried to pull back, he squeezed Stan's neck and jerked Stan's face up. "Let me see," he said, leaning forward. He took Stan's face in both hands, turning it this way and that in the light, apparently completely oblivious to Stan's persistent hard-on. He pulled one of Stan's cheeks down, forcing his eye open. Stan flinched and tried to turn away, but Ford kept firm, yanking him forward. "I said, let me see!"

"Alright, alright! Christ."

Ford's face was so close to Stan's that it would just take a tilt of Stan's head to kiss him. He resisted the urge, his boner starting to wilt under Ford's intense stare. "It is you," Ford said. "Isn't it?" His hands slowly relaxed on Stan's face and drifted down his neck.

"I have no idea what's going on right now," Stan said. "Can I have my clothes?"

"What?" Ford looked down; his hands snapped away from Stan and he grimaced. "Oh, for the – I don't have them. You do."

Stan squinted, then gestured vaguely at his naked body: *Does it look like I do?* But even as he did, they materialized – it was an old, old outfit, a white shirt with a doodle in permanent marker on the sleeves and jeans with a gaping hole in the right knee, clothes that he stopped wearing when he was thirteen. Ford's look of disdain made shame heat Stan's face. It wasn't *his* choice.

"What?" Stan demanded, standing. The beach flickered – they were in an alley, a bar, a motel room. Ford watched the scenery change, scowling more with each one. "Got a problem with my clothes, Poindexter?"

"That isn't the point," Ford said. The fact that he wasn't rising to the bait made Stan angrier. "Would you *stop that?*" he snapped when the scene turned into their old living room, lit only by the glow of their ancient television. "We have more important things to worry about."

"I'm not doing anything!"

"Fine." Ford walked into Stan and grabbed his face again, gripping hard. Stan winced and tried to pull back, but his grip was firm.

"Damn it, let go – "

The room turned blank; Stan was on his back on the ground. Ford sat on top of him, eyes shut, meditative and focused. "Something is happening, Stanley," he said. "And I need to know what it is."

Stan's stomach lurched. The weight of Ford's body wasn't helping; Stan shuddered and tried to push, but his hands weren't working. "Ford – Ford, get off – "

"Oh, now you want me off of you," Ford said. The disdain in his voice was a slap to the face, shame billowing through Stan. "Just be quiet and let me focus."

"Ford, I'm serious – " But it was too late; Stan began to vomit, his stomach seizing. It was a torrent, covering Stan's chest, his stomach, Ford's legs and hands, and once it started, it didn't stop, and Ford started to puke too, and –

Stan jolted awake. There was vomit on his shirt. God, how much had he drunk, last night? He staggered to his feet, and regretted it – he managed to make it to the kitchen sink and flipped on the water, emptying the rest of himself into the metal basin.

He spent the better part of the morning more hungover than he'd been since – god, since he was twenty-three and Maria had kept pushing liquor on him for hours. He didn't think he'd

had that much. Apparently he was getting old. After an hour or so, he just dropped all of his towels on the bathroom floor and stayed there, sleeping on and off, shivering and sweating and praying to god that something this stupid didn't kill him.

By three, the worst of it had passed. He took a long shower and staggered to bed, where he alternated between sleeping and thumbing through magazines and sipping water. He slept early, and long; maybe he dreamed, feverish snippets, but nothing of them stayed in the morning.

*

Somewhere, on the other side, Ford sat up. The only thing he had to break was himself and his table, and he couldn't risk leaving – the table it was, then, Ford kicking and stomping it until it was nothing but broken splinters. He didn't feel any better, but he felt clearer, more focused. This wasn't a coincidence. It wasn't a hallucination.

Against all odds, he and Stanley were reaching each other's dreams.

This meant one of two things: The portal was open, or the portal was leaking. Either way, Bill had a way into their dimension, though he must not know it yet if Stan was alive and well. It was up to Ford, then, to figure out how to close that door for good.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!